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THE MUSICAL TIMES,

And Singing Class Circular.

JULY 1, 1869.

THE STORY OF MOZART'S REQUIEM.

By WILLIAM POLE, F.R.S., Mus. Doc., Oxon.

(Continued from p. 107.)

CHAP. III.—*Discovery of the first manuscript of the complete work, and discussions upon it. Latest information. 1839 to 1864.*

WE now come to a new and very important stage of the history. The greatest difficulty throughout the investigation had been the absence of any original manuscript score of the complete Requiem as published and known generally to the world. The recovered *Urschriften*, in Mozart's hand, mentioned at the end of the last chapter, were unfinished; and the evidence shewed, pretty clearly, that a complete score of the work had been delivered, after Mozart's death, to the mysterious messenger. But whether this copy had been written by Mozart, or by Süssmayer, or by some one else, or to what extent it corresponded, either with the *Urschriften*, or with the published copy, there was no means of knowing. The manuscript itself appeared to have been entirely lost, all the discussions failing to cause its production, or to bring any clue to its whereabouts, or even to shew that it was still in existence. So matters remained until the beginning of 1839, when an announcement was made which came like an electric shock on the musical world. It appeared in No. 5 of the Leipzig *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung*, and ran as follows:—

"THE PERFECT ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT OF MOZART'S REQUIEM is now really discovered, and in possession of the Imperial Library, at Vienna. This original manuscript, which is, from the first to the last note, in the handwriting of Mozart himself, contains also the *Sonctus*, *Benedictus*, *Agnus Dei*, and the repetition of the first movement with the fugue. Herr Hofrath von Mosel (the chief custodian of the Library) will give to the musical world a detailed account of this event. This will appear soon, and we will forthwith make our readers acquainted with all further particulars."

Here was a happy termination to the dispute. The widow's first statement was correct; Stadler had been under a delusion; Süssmayer was an impostor; the world had been mystified unnecessarily for half a century; and every note of the long-doubted composition was proved genuine after all!

Weber, in No. 80 of the *Cecilia*, copied this announcement, which, as will be imagined, excited his lively interest. He wrote an article upon it, going over his former arguments, and calling attention to his often expressed belief, in spite of the assertions to the contrary of Süssmayer, Stadler, and the widow, that Mozart had actually finished the Requiem. He does not appear to have been aware what the nature of the music in the new score was, or how far it corresponded with or differed from the known copy; but he pointed out the great importance of the discovery, both to musical art and musical history, and stated his anxiety to see the result of Mosel's enquiries. But this he was never destined to know in this world. He had long been seriously ill; his article, like the subject of it, was written on the bed of death; and, before his eyes could see what they had so long desired, his spirit had departed to join that of the great man, whose work had so long been his most absorbing study.

With his death the *Cecilia* stopped, Weber's article being, with the exception of a trifling notice, the last that appeared. The publication was only resumed, after some years, by entirely new hands.

But to return to the circumstances of the discovery. Mozart's handwriting was peculiar and well known, and the examination of the manuscript satisfied some of the most experienced judges of its genuineness; and the history of the copy, from the time of its delivery to the messenger at Mozart's house, to its deposit in the Library, was thoroughly authenticated. Moreover, it was found to correspond perfectly in contents with the published score; and, taking all the circumstances together, no doubt seemed possible that it was really an original score from the master's own hand.

The existence of the *Urschriften* appeared to form a difficulty; but it was attempted to explain this away by the fact that an examination of a great number of Mozart's manuscripts had shewn that it was customary for him to make preparatory sketches of compositions for voices and instruments, in which he generally wrote the vocal parts and instrumental bass complete, adding only here and there *motivi*, or indications of the other parts. It was, therefore, considered reasonable that, for a work of this important nature, he should first have made these sketches, and afterwards have written out a fair and completed copy, in discharge of his undertaking to Count Wallsegg, who had given the commission for the work, and paid beforehand for its execution.

This result was so welcome to the admirers of the master, who had been scandalized by the asserted interposition of a strange hand in the work, that they at once turned their attention to the facts elicited during the controversy, in order to get the support of any of these facts that seemed favourable to the conclusion, and to explain any that appeared adverse; and great ingenuity was shewn in these efforts.

New stress was laid on a form of argument originally brought forward by Weber, though for a different object, namely, that the *Urschriften* alone seemed but a small result to have been attained, when it was well known how long and how earnestly Mozart had worked, day and night, at the composition, and with what great facility and quickness he was accustomed to compose. It was pointed out that he expressly declined to undertake any other work till this was finished; and yet that, shortly before his death, he composed the *Lob der Freundschaft*, as if acknowledging that the task to which he had given precedence was done.

It was further pointed out that Rochlitz, in certain statements published by him as to the last events of Mozart's life, and which, he stated, were vouched for, had used the remarkable expression that, "before the end of the fourth week after the commission, he was ready." Nissen also stated that, when the score was brought to his bedside, he "looked the whole through," and remarked, "Did I not say that I was writing the Requiem for myself?" expressions, it was argued, inconsistent with the idea of unfinished manuscripts of a work, to which three numbers and the conclusion was not even yet commenced.

The evidence against the authenticity consisted of the positive assertion of Madame Mozart, of Süssmayer, and of Stadler, that Mozart had not finished the Requiem. These were explained as follows. As to Madame Mozart, her behaviour throughout the whole business had not been such as to give her

evidence much weight. She had, in the first instance, positively asserted that the Requiem was entirely Mozart's composition; and though afterwards she denied this, her statements had been so conflicting and so varied, from time to time, to suit her own purposes, that no faith was put in her assertions. Indeed, it was urged that from the trouble she suffered on the loss of her husband, and from the known confusion in which his papers lay, she probably did not know, with much precision, what had really been done.

Süssmayer's statement was in such positive terms as to admit of no explanation but by impugning his veracity. This had been already called in question. He had claimed, in his letter, the completion, among the rest, of the "Requiem and Kyrie;" but as Stadler had seen these in Mozart's own hand in a perfectly finished state, Süssmayer's assertion was proved incorrect, and his whole testimony thereby subjected to suspicion.

The Abbé Stadler's testimony was much more trustworthy than that of either of the others; but it was pointed out that he had never claimed to have had any direct communication on the subject of the Requiem either with Mozart himself, or with Süssmayer. He knew nothing but what the widow chose to tell him, and saw nothing but what she chose to shew him; and the existence of the *Urschriften*, which he laid so much stress on, did not disprove the possibility of Mozart's having made a subsequent copy. An additional argument in favour of the genuineness, was derived from the character of the music in the latter portions of the work, which, though entirely claimed by Süssmayer, was pronounced by competent judges to bear unmistakable traces of the great master's hand.

From all these considerations, the corroboration of the evidence afforded by the copy itself was deemed very satisfactory. But as numerous and weighty opinions continued to be expressed by persons who still held to the assertions of Süssmayer, Stadler, and the widow, against the completion of the work by Mozart, it was thought advisable to submit the copy to a more rigid scrutiny and examination than it had yet received. A committee was accordingly got together of the most eminent musicians, and those best acquainted with Mozart's handwriting, who could be found in Vienna, and these were charged with the duty of closely comparing the score with other manuscripts of the master. For this purpose, the *Urschriften*, already in the Library, became very valuable, as, containing, to a great extent, precisely the same music and words, they afforded an excellent test of similarity. But the enquiry was not limited to these; a great number of other authentic MSS., many of them of a date only shortly anterior, being procured for comparison.

The examination was made with the greatest care and patience. The comparison with the Mozart manuscripts showed a remarkably close resemblance, both in the notes and the text, and even in the figuring of the bass. But as a further test, the score was compared with some manuscripts of Süssmayer's, which showed scarcely the remotest similarity, and in some points presented a marked difference. This led the majority of the committee at once to express their conviction that the score was really in Mozart's hand.

The minority, while they admitted that the evidence in favour of the genuineness much outweighed

the adverse presumption, called attention to certain points which they considered still open to doubt. The date on the score was 1792,* whereas Mozart died in 1791; the paging was not consecutive; ungrammatical progressions were found in some of the parts; and a few other such objections were urged.

But the most important doubts had reference to certain dissimilarities in the handwriting, which, though minute, were still considered important. The principal of these were in the shapes of the naturals, and of certain capital letters in the text. In the first movement (*Requiem* and *Kyrie*) they corresponded with Mozart's usual way of forming them, but in all the following parts they differed from it. These objections, which showed the extraordinary care with which the investigation was conducted, were met by ingenious answers and explanations; but it was felt that every possible effort should be made to settle the question; and that, in particular, the doubts raised as to the peculiarities in the handwriting should receive the most careful renewed scrutiny. There was yet a chance that more light might be thrown on the subject by a more thorough investigation of manuscripts by Süssmayer, if such could be found. Many efforts were made to obtain more extensive specimens of his writing, but in vain; until at length there were found two examples, namely, a Terzetto, with orchestral accompaniment, fifteen sheets, and a bass air, with orchestra, in ten sheets, both belonging to Süssmayer's opera of *La Serva Padrona*, and dated 1793.

The examination of these at once changed altogether the aspect of affairs. To the amazement of everybody, the handwriting turned out to be an exact counterpart of that of Mozart. The similarity, both in notes and text, was almost incredible; and what was more to the purpose, the slight differences detected in the forms of the letters, which could not be identified with any of Mozart's writings, were here prominently and exclusively found.† The longer and the more carefully the comparison was continued, the more perplexing it became; particularly as, on the other hand, some signs were found in the score which appeared to harmonize better with Mozart's hand than with Süssmayer's. Under these circumstances, too, all the minor objections as to the paging, and so on, which previously had been treated as insignificant, acquired greater force.

In this dilemma there appeared only one course open which was likely to be useful in solving the difficulty; that was to make a last appeal to the widow. It was true, her previous conduct throughout the history had not been such as to give much encouragement, but it was hoped that, as her evidence was now so all-important, she might be induced to give a positive and satisfactory answer, at least, to the question whether, to the best of her knowledge, Mozart did or did not finish the Requiem. Poor woman! She was now very old; she had no longer, as formerly, any pecuniary object to attain; and, we hope, in all charity, she might be feeling a little compunction for her past sins in the matter. At any rate, she answered promptly. Her letter, dated 10th February, 1839, ran thus:—

* It was afterwards clearly established that this date had been really inserted by Mozart himself!

† Other instances of remarkable similarity in musical handwriting have been known. Sebastian Bach's second wife, for example, wrote so like her husband, that only an expert could tell the difference; and Joachim's manuscript was, at one time, deceptively similar to that of Mendelssohn.

"If the score is perfect and complete, it is *not* by Mozart, for he did not finish it. Attention should be given to what Süßmayer has written, for, in my opinion, it is impossible for any person to imitate the handwriting of another so closely as not to be discovered. So much upon this; and now I give my assurance that Süßmayer, and no other, finished the Requiem. This was not a difficult task to him; for, as is well known, the chief parts were all set out (*die Hauptstellen alle ausgesetzt waren*), and Süßmayer could not go astray."

Although this answer, from its vague generality, left much still to be desired in the way of explanation, it was explicit on the main question, and it agreed with the testimony of both Süßmayer and Stadler.

The interesting circumstances connected with this investigation have been described, in a little work, by Herr von Mosel, who took an active part in them. In conformity with the odd character of everything in this history, this pamphlet appears to have been originally written under the impression that the manuscript was really Mozart's; and, although the subsequent discovery of the deception is related, the author appears to have admitted it somewhat against his inclination. He adds: "In spite of the letter of the widow, and the corroborative statements of the Abbé Stadler, some of the parties, of acknowledged authority, who were invited to the examination of the manuscript, persist in their opinion that the entire manuscript is in Mozart's hand." He alludes to the arguments in favour of this view, particularly to the evidence derived from the music itself; but he does not appear to consider it tenable, as he closes with the remark that the *Urschriften* "contain all that exists of Mozart's swan-song in his own handwriting." This view, indeed, does not appear to have been long persevered in; the evidence was too strong against it, and the calm and deliberate judgment of musical Germany soon settled down into the conviction now (as far as the author of this paper knows) universally held there, that the completion of the Requiem in the Wallsegg score was not Mozart's work, but was a dexterous imitation of his handwriting executed by Süßmayer.

The copy, however, proved exceedingly valuable in one respect, namely, that it restored the long-missing *Urschrift* of the *Requiem* and *Kyrie*. In this part of the score the handwriting presented none of the variations that were traceable to Süßmayer. It was unquestionably Mozart's own; and it was obvious (as indeed had previously been declared by Stadler) that Süßmayer, finding this portion already finished by Mozart, had made it up as the first part of the copy to be furnished to Count Wallsegg, and had added to it the whole of the subsequent portions, so cleverly imitating the writing as to make the Count believe the whole was in Mozart's hand.

Through this happy acquisition, therefore, the Imperial Library became possessed of the complete original manuscript of the Requiem, as written by Mozart himself, and comprising, as Mosel says, everything in the composition which, according to any direct evidence, is to be ascribed to his pen.

Otto Jahn, when compiling his great *Life of Mozart*, published in 1859, devoted much attention to the question, and personally examined, with great care, all the original documents. He confirms, in every particular, the description of the manuscripts given by Mosel, and calls attention to a curious fact which gives additional weight to the evidence of the Wallsegg score being by Süßmayer. In the last nine bars of the *Tuba mirum*, Mozart had, in his *Urschriften*, completely filled in the two violin and viola parts; but in the Wallsegg score this filling in is departed from, omitting some of the best and most character-

istic features of Mozart's instrumentation in the second violin and viola parts. It is scarcely credible that if Mozart had re-copied his work, he would have spoiled it in this way; but it is quite intelligible that Süßmayer, in copying it, may accidentally have omitted these lines, and then may have filled them up in his own less skilful fashion. Jahn adopts the Süßmayer conclusion as a matter of course; not even hinting that it is considered open to any further question. In the magnificent Thematic Catalogue of Mozart's Works, published in 1862, by L. von Köchel, the same view is taken, Süßmayer's share in the work being given as an acknowledged and well-ascertained fact.*

[To be continued.]

* In spite of this settlement of the question in Germany, I believe there is still a lingering disposition in this country to adhere to the belief that the Wallsegg score was really finished by Mozart. Mr. Holmes, author of the admirable *English Life of Mozart*, and of many valuable critical essays on his works, appears to have strongly held to this view till his death, in 1859; and in my communications with several eminent English musicians, I have found the same opinion prevail. I, therefore, think it may be well to state here, as succinctly as possible, a summary of the evidence against this opinion. Omitting testimony and arguments of minor importance, it may be collected under eight heads:—

First, the evidence of the handwriting. The first number of the score, the *Requiem*, was admitted to be Mozart's; the question only arose as to the subsequent portions; and the close resemblance of the writing in these to Mozart's, on the one hand, and to certain works of Süßmayer's, on the other, made it necessary to carry the comparison into very minute details, in order to draw any conclusive inference; and the crucial points were as follows:—

(a). The naturals. Mozart's were especially characteristic of his hand; he made them with a closed square, narrower above than below. In the suspected MS. the naturals were formed with open squares, similar to those ordinarily made by Süßmayer. But they did not prevail throughout; close ones, like Mozart's, were mixed with them, gradually becoming more numerous towards the end. It happened, further, that naturals with open squares were found in a manuscript of Mozart's of late date. This difference, therefore, was not conclusive.

(b). In the text, the capital letters, B, P, Q, R, and T, differed from the forms adopted by Mozart. In certain MSS. of Mozart's the B was found in different forms, some resembling those in question; and one R was also discovered exactly similar. No example of the forms used for the other letters could be found in any of Mozart's writings. In both these particulars the latter part of the score differed in a marked degree, not only from the first number, but also from the *Urschriften*, which, as they contained the same music and the same words, and must have been written nearly at the same date, formed an admirable standard of comparison. But the unusual forms agreed *exactly* with the newly found manuscripts of Süßmayer's, particularly in regard to the capital letters, P, Q, and T, which were here universally of the shape sought in vain under Mozart's hand. In fact, the expression used by Mosel is, that although the likeness of the handwriting in Süßmayer's MSS. to Mozart's was almost incredible, it still more perfectly and completely resembled the writing in the suspected portions of the Wallsegg score. Thus, it follows, that if Mozart wrote the latter he must have intentionally modified his handwriting, in some particulars, to imitate that of Süßmayer; which is incredible.

2. Further evidence is drawn from the numbering of the pages. The first movement was folioed 1 to 10; and with this the *Urschriften* (forming the sequel to it) followed on, 11 to 45. But in the Wallsegg score the *Dies Iræ* begins again with page 1; and, at the *Sanctus*, page 1 comes in a third time. It is thought extremely improbable that, had Mozart completed the score, he would have departed from the consecutive paging followed in the unfinished copy.

3. There appears also an absence of reasonable cause why Mozart, if he had completed the work, should have given himself, ill and weak as he was, the extra labour of re-copying the whole, when it would have been so much easier to have filled up the blank lines in what he had already written. This was not a case of preparatory sketches, or of improvements made in re-copying. The *Urschriften* are evidently no mere sketches, but fair copies, intended to be filled in and completed; and in the copying there is no trace of improvement or reconsideration.

4. The single alteration made in the copying at the end of the *Tuba mirum*, is no improvement, but the contrary. It is scarcely credible that Mozart would thus have altered for the worse his own characteristic work; but it is quite possible it may have been done accidentally or unintentionally by Süßmayer.

5. However strong may be the signs of Mozart's hand in the concluding portions, there is much in them that can hardly be attributed to him. For example, it is difficult to believe that he would have made the closing movement a mere repetition of the opening one; and yet this is an integral part of the Wallsegg score.

6. The testimony of the widow, though not worth much generally in the matter of the Requiem, has great force here. Her first assertion was that Mozart finished the work. This was obviously the hypothesis it would have been most advantageous to her to